

Abraham Lincoln papers

From Thomas E. Bramlette to Abraham Lincoln, March 2, 1865

Frankfort March 2d 1865

Sir:

Enclosed please find a copy of my dissent to the action of the Legislature rejecting the Constitutional Amendment.—¹ Learning that the opponents were claiming that the present rejection was final in Kentucky I deemed it proper to place upon record, — in order to correct such impression, — my dissent.

1 The Kentucky legislature had recently voted to reject the amendment to the U. S. Constitution that abolished slavery. A copy of Bramlette's printed letter to the legislature, dated March 1, 1865, is in this collection.

I believe the people of Kentucky will reverse this action of the Legislature; we shall see.² Your peculiar friends(?) through the "National Unionist" — Lexington Ky, I see charge you and myself with "bargain"³

2 Despite Kentucky's rejection, the constitutional amendment was ratified by the necessary three-fourths majority of states and officially adopted as the 13th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution in December 1865. Kentucky did not ratify the 13th Amendment until 1976.

3 In an attempt to persuade the legislature to ratify the amendment, Bramlette had suggested that a resolution be adopted which made Kentucky's ratification of the amendment contingent upon receiving a \$34 million payment from the Federal Government to compensate the state's slaveholders. Some newspapers speculated that this proposal was the result of a "bargain" between Lincoln and the governor. See Michael Vorenberg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 217.

I hope you may be able to survive the shock! I am still living and doing well notwithstanding the cruel infliction!—

Some who have “lost their” occupation by the wholesome change made in Ky⁴ — bawl like a weanling calf. Their grief is ludicrous to all, for the cause is well understood. They can be bought again — if needed — but the price should be greatly reduced. They inflicted upon the Administration the heaviest losses in public confidence, and made spoils a matter of open corruption. Maj. Genl Palmer has laid a strong grasp upon public confidence, and I trust and believe will hold it with a steady and just hand.

4 General Stephen G. Burbridge, Bramlette's nemesis, had recently been removed as commander of the military forces in Kentucky and replaced by John M. Palmer.

Rely upon it, you have not lost a single friend, but have made hosts by the change. The love of Justice is so deeply imbedded in the hearts of our people, that your action in securing to them the hope of its restoration in Kentucky, gives cheer to their hearts, and confidence in your purposes of Justice.

Respectfully

Thos E Bramlette